I:Gordon E-6, 5 (no date) 1937 ART Khasi ART

SECTION III.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS.

TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.

120 [101] The inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills may be said to be divided into the following sections:—Khasi, Synteng or Pnar, War, Bhoi, and Lyngam. These divisions represent collections of people inhabiting several tracts of country and speaking dialects which, although often deriving their origin from the Khasi roots, are frequently so dissimilar to the standard language as to be almost unrecognisable. The above sections may be sub-divided as follows:—The Khasis into the inhabitants of the central high plateau, Cherra and Nongstoin, Maharam, Mairo, Nongkhlaw, and the neighbouring Siemships. The Syntengs or Pnars may be divided as follows:—Into Syntengs proper, Nongtungs, and Khorwangs; the Wars into *War* proper, and *War* Pnar; the Bhois into Jaithongs, Myrsis, Rymkhongs, and the Khasi-Bhois, i.e. Khasis who inhabit the low country to the north of the district, which is called generally the "Bhoi." The Lyngams are a separate division. They must not be confused with the Dkhs or Hatas who are slaves. It must, however, be remembered that the Jaithong, Myrsi, and Rymkhong Sub-divisions of the Bhoi division are not Khasi, but Mikir, i.e. they belong to the Bodo or Hara group. The Lyngams are half Khasis and half Garos, and the Dkhs or Hatas are slaves who observe the Khasi custom of erecting memorial stones. The above tribes and sub-tribes are not strictly endogamous, nor are they strictly exogamous, but they are more endogamous than exogamous; for instance, Syntengs more often marry Syntengs than Khasis, and vice versâ, and it would be usually considered derogatory for a

101 Sea 619

Khasi of the Uplands to marry a Bhoi or War woman, and a Diengei to marry a Lyngngam. These divisions are subdivided into a number of septs, taking Mr. Risley's definition of "sept" as being the largest exogamous division of the tribe. It will, however, be more convenient to speak of these septs as "clans," the word "clan" having been used in other parts of this Monograph and by other writers.

Many of the clans trace their descent from ancestresses called *kiew* (grandmothers), who are styled *ki Lawbei Tynrai*, lit. grandmothers of the root (i.e. the root of the tree of the clan). In some of the clans, the name of this ancestress survives; such as instances the Mylliem-ngap and Mylliem-phlah clans of the Khynriam State, the name of the ancestresses of the clans being *ka ngap* (honey, i.e. the sweet one), and *ka phlah* respectively. This tribal ancestress, as will be seen in the paragraph of the monograph dealing with ancestor-worship, is greatly revered, in fact, she may almost be said to be deified. The descendants of one ancestress of the clan, *Ka Lawbei Tynrai*, are called *shi kur* or one clan. We then come to the division of the *kpoh* or sub-clan, all the descendants of one great grandmother (*ka Lawbei Tynrai*), being styled *shi kpoh*. The next division is the *iing* (lit. house) or family. It is almost invariably the case that the grandmother, her daughters and the daughter's children, live together under one roof, the grandmother during her life-time being the head of the house. The grandmother is styled *ka Lawbei Khynrao*, or the young grandmother, to distinguish her from the other two grandmothers, *ka Lawbei-tynrai* and *ka Lawbei-tynrao* who have been mentioned above. The young grandmother, her daughters and their children are said to belong to *shi iing*, one house, the word *iing* in this instance possessing amongst the Khasis the same significance as the English word *family*.

We will now see how the Khasi clan (*kur or jaid*) grew out of the Khasi family (*iing*). Let us take the example of the great Diengdoh clan of Cherra. Disregarding the myth that the Diengdohs are descended from a mermaid, it may be stated that there seems to be a fairly general belief amongst the Diengdohs that their first ancestress or *kiew* came from the

Raja (probably the Raja of Jaintia) and the Assamese Raja-ma-lan. They fled to a place called Lyndangumtilli, near Lyngkyrim. Finding this place unsuitable as a home, the family split up into four divisions. One division returned to Jowai, where it increased and multiplied and after-wards grew into the Lait clan, another went to Nongkhlaw and became the Diengdoh Lyngkhoi clan; another went to Mawsang and formed what is now known as the Pariong clan; the fourth, after some vicissitudes of fortune, went to Rangjyrteh and Cherra, at which place is established the powerful Diengkhlieh clan, and became after-wards one of the chief ministerial or minister clans of this state. I have quoted the history of the origin of the Diengdoh clan at some length, to show what I consider to be an example of the Khasi conception of how the clan was formed, i.e. from a common ancestress, all of the clans having traditions more or less of descent from some particular Khasi or ancestress. This story moreover is remarkable as pointing to a Khasi migration from beyond the Kopili river to their present abode. The clans of the present day are nothing more or less than exogamous families, they are bound together by the religious tie of ancestor-worship in common, and of a common tribal appellation, except in cases of clans which have, owing to their size, split up into several sub-divisions, like the Diengdoh clan; each sub-division possessing their own symbols. Ancestor-worship in common and tribal symbols in common seem to indicate that the original unit was the family and not the tribe, for there would be no reason for the members of a clan to worship the same household gods and to deposit the remains of the clan members in the same tomb unless there was some strong tie, such as that of consanguinity, binding them together. It has been already mentioned that each of these clans is strictly exogamous; this again supports the family origin theory. A Khasi can commit no greater sin than to marry within the tribe. Some of the clans are prohibited moreover from intermarriage with other clans, because of such clans being of common descent. If the tribes (see Appendix) are carefully examined, it will be seen that some of them bear the names of animals, such as the *Shwish* or monkey clan, the *Thaw* or crab clan, or of trees, such as the Diengdoh clan (already referred to). The

Given that the lien not country; the idea being that as long as the house remain in the widow's keeping, the spirit of her husband is still with her. On this account many wives who revere their husband's memories, and who do not contemplate remarriage, purposely keep the house for a long time. If a widow marries, even after the customary taboo period of one year, whilst her deceased husband's house are still in her keeping, she is generally looked down upon. Her children in such a case perform the ceremony of handing over the house of their father to his clan in a building specially erected for the purpose. The widow cannot enter therein, or even go near it, whilst the ceremony is proceeding, no matter whether the *ding sang*, or the price for removing the taboo after a husband's death, has been paid to the husband's clan or not. There is no evidence to show that polyandry ever existed amongst the Khasis. Unlike the Thibetans, the Khasi women seem to have contented themselves always with one husband, at any rate with one at a time. Certainly at the present day they are monandrists. Polygamy does not exist amongst the Khasis; such a practice would naturally not be in vogue amongst a people who observe the matriarchate. There are instances, however, of men having wives other than those they have regularly married, and in the War country children by such wives enjoy rights to their father's acquired property equally with the children by the legally married wife. As the clans are strictly exogamous, a Khasi cannot take a wife from his own clan; to do this would entail the most disastrous religious, as well as social consequences. For to marry within the clan is the greatest sin a Khasi can commit, and would cause excommunication by his kindfolk and the refusal of funeral ceremonies at death, and his bones would not be allowed a resting place in the sepulchres of the clan. To give a list of all the Khasi exogamous clans would perhaps serve no useful purpose, but I have prepared from information, kindly furnished me by the Siems of Khyrim and Cherrapunji, a list of the clans in those States which will be found in Appendices A and B. These will suffice as examples. It will be seen from the Cherra list that the different divisions of the Diengdoh clan, viz. Lain, Diengdoh-bah, Diengdoh-kylla, are prohibited from intermarriage; this is due to these branches of the clan being

[illegible] connected from a common ancestress. There are also instances of clans being connected with one another, such connection being called by the Khasis iaiah bar. Whenever such connection exists intermarriage is strictly prohibited, and is considered to be sang. There is no custom of hypergamy. A Khasi cannot marry his maternal uncle's daughter during the lifetime of the maternal uncle. This is probably due to the fact that the maternal uncle, or kni, in a Khasi household is regarded more in the light of a father than of an uncle. His children, however, would belong to the clan of his wife and these would, therefore, in ordinary cases be no bar to the nephew marrying one of them. Marriage with the daughter of a father's sister is not allowed during the lifetime of the father, but after the latter's death there is no religious ban, although such unions are looked upon with disfavour by the Khasis. In the War country, however, such marriages are totally prohibited. A Khasi cannot marry two sisters, but he can marry his deceased wife's sister after the expiry of one year from the wife's death, on payment of *jing sang* (price of song, or taboo) to the wife's clan. A Khasi cannot marry the daughter of his father's brother, she is to him even like his own sister. Similarly he cannot marry the daughter of his father's paternal uncle. He can, however, marry the daughter of his mother's brother, provided that the brother is dead. This somewhat paradoxical state of affairs is explained by the fact that the children of the mother's brother belong to a different clan to that of the mother, i.e. to the mother's brother's wife's clan. The Khasi, Synteng, War, and Lyngam divisions are not strictly endogamous groups, and there is nothing to prevent intermarriage between them. For instance, it has been the custom in the Nongkhlaw Sirn family to obtain husbands for the princesses of the state from the War country. There is no custom amongst the Khasis of two men exchanging daughters, i.e. each marrying his son to the other's daughter. Notwithstanding the existence of the matriarchate, and the fact that all ancestral property is vested in the mother, it would be a mistake to suppose that the father is a nobody in the Khasi home. It is true that the *kni*, or [illegible]'s elder brother, is the head of the house, but the father is the executive head of the new home, where, after children

Preliminaries.—A young man of marriageable age, say between seventeen or eighteen years of age and twenty-five, has cast upon a girl of, say, between thirteen and eighteen years, as likely to become a fitting partner; probably he has been acquainted with the young woman for some time before and is on more or less easy terms of intimacy with her. He mentions the name of the girl to his parents and makes said wish in the house, and they agree or disagree, as the case may be. Sometimes marriages are arranged by the parents of the young people themselves. Having agreed regarding the fitness of the bride, the young man's parents and a male representative of the family, or in some cases a man unconnected with the family, to arrange matters with the parents of the bride. The latter then ascertain their daughter's wishes. According to the law of Khasi Kur, the daughters usually always agree, it is not seldom that it is necessary to bring any pressure to bear. The parents then investigate whether there is any reason, or taboo, such as close relationship, between the young woman and her intended, in the way of the marriage. If there is found to be no such hindrance, they fix a date for finally arranging the marriage (see *infra*). On the day appointed the bride's family consult the augurs by inspecting eggs and examining fowls' entrails. If the omens are favourable will and good. Should they be unfavourable they abandon the marriage project. There is a strong prejudice against a marriage taking place under unfavourable auspices, the belief being that such an union will be childless, that the bride will die an untimely death, or that poverty will ensue. Given favourable auspices, the parents fix a day for the marriage. It was formerly the custom for the bridegroom to provide himself beforehand with a ring, usually of silver, but, amongst the rich, of gold, which is called *ka synjat* (hence the name of the marriage ceremony *pyddiat-synjat*), and for the bride to provide herself with a similar ring. The bridegroom used to place his ring upon the bride's finger, and the bride used to place her ring upon the bridegroom's finger; it is however believed that this custom is now nowadays. On the marriage day a man is selected from the party of the bridegroom called *u briang*, or go-between. The bridegroom then sets out with

CHAPTER

The word *pomsa* is one in common use amongst the Naga tribes. It seems to be a matter of doubt whether the word belongs to any of the numerous languages or dialects spoken by these tribes; but for our purposes it may be taken to mean taboo. The Khasi word *seng*, which implies an interdiction either religious or social from doing any particular thing, might have been employed; but as the word *pomsa* is so commonly used when speaking of taboos amongst the hill tribes of this province, I have thought fit to employ it here. The word *pomsa*, or taboo, may be held to include the Khasi *seng*. Taboos amongst the Khasis, Wars and Lyngams may be divided into two sections; (a) general, and (b) special. Instances of general taboo have not been found amongst the Khasis, but the following taboo called *Ka seng kla* amongst the War villages of Sohiong and Nongpi is peculiar and therefore worthy of description. Its chief peculiarity is that during the time the *seng kla* continues, the inhabitants of these two villages are not allowed to associate with foreigners. This *pomsa* takes place twice a year, in the months of June and November, and lasts for a month each time. During the *pomsa* foreigners are not allowed to stay the night in these two villages, and the villagers must not sleep the night outside their villages. If they do not return home for the night, they are subjected to a fine. There is a prohibition against eating, smoking, or chewing betel-nut with foreigners during the period. The above is the only instance of general taboo that I have been able to find amongst the Wars, but in the Lyngam villages there is a taboo on all outsiders at the time of the village puja. Such a taboo amongst the Lyngams is not to be wondered at, as they have probably imbibed the notion from their Garo mothers, intermarriages between Lyngams and Garos being common. The Garos, like other Tibeto-Burmans, have numerous taboos. There are numerous instances of special taboos among the Khasis. *Kulo khmy seng*, or marrying within the *kur* or clan, is the most important taboo of all, and is regarded as the most serious offence a Khasi can commit. It admits of no expiation, and the house and estate of the offender cannot

In Gordon E-6, 9 (no date) 1937 ART Khasi ART

e difference. It is owing to these three different names being used for the same people that there has been so much confusion about Lyngams previously; e.g. at one census they were named Lyngam, at another they received the appellation of Garo, and at a third enumeration they were called Khasis. In Section I the habitat of the Lyngams has been roughly defined. It is impossible to define the Lyngam country exactly, because these people are continually shifting their village sites owing to the exigencies of jhoom cultivation, which has been described in Section II. Some of the Lyngams preserve a tradition that they originally came from the Kamrup plains. It is interesting that a people, like the Garos in so many respects, should have the same idea as the Garos as to the hills on the south bank of the Brahmaputra not always having been their abode. The Garo legend is that they dwelt for some years in the Goalpara and Kamrup plains after they descended from Tibet, and before they moved to the Garo Hills; and there is considerable evidence of their occupation of both districts in the shape of certain Garo villages on both banks of the Brahmaputra for some little distance up the river. If, as I suspect, the Lyngams are an offshoot of the Garos, it is, perhaps, possible that they entered the Khasi Hills south in the same way as the Garos entered the hill district to which they have given their name. The Lyngams are much darker than the Khasis, and possess the Tibeto-Burman type of feature often to a marked degree. It is not extraordinary that they should have adopted some of the Khasi customs, for the Khasis, being the stronger people, would in course of time be bound to influence them in this respect. That the Lyngams observe the matriarchate and erect (some class) memorial stones is not peculiar, because the Garos, like the Khasis, are also a matriarchal people (to a limited degree), and the custom of erecting memorial stones is not confined to the Khasis, for other hill tribes in Assam observe the practice, e.g. certain Naga tribes and the Mikirs; and the Garos themselves put up carved posts, called bima, in honour of the departed. Although there is not much intermarriage between the Khasis and the Lyngams nowadays, perhaps in days gone by there was a mixture of blood, the result being the hybrid race we are now

In Gordon E-6, 9 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

quilt, made out of the bark of a tree, which is beaten out and then carefully sewn, several layers of fattened bark being used before the right thickness is attained. This quilt is called by the Lyngams "*Ka sylla*" (Garo *simpak*). Food is cooked in earthen pots, but no plates are used, the bread being one of the morning teas taking their place. The leaves are thrown away after use, a fresh supply being required for each meal.

The Lyngams have rice beer, they do not distil spirit; the beer is brewed according to the Khasi method. Games they have none, and there are no jovial archery meetings like those of the Khasis. The Lyngams methods of hunting are setting spring guns and digging pitfalls for game. The people say that now the Government and the Sirdar of Nongstoin have prohibited both of these methods of destroying game, they no longer employ them. But I came across a pitfall for deer not long ago in the neighbourhood of a village in the Lyngam country. The people declared it to be a very old one; but this I very much doubt, and I fear that these objectionable methods of hunting are still used. The Lyngams fish to a small extent with nets, but their idea of fishing, *par excellence*, is poisoning the streams, an account of which has already been given in this monograph. The Lyngams are omnivorous feeders, they may be said to eat everything except dogs, snakes, the hoolock monkey, and lizards. They like rice, when they can get it; for sometimes the out-turn of their fields does not last them more than a few months. They then have to fall back on *Job's tears* and millet. They eat arums largely, and for vegetables they cook wild plantains and the young shoots of bamboos and cane plants. The Lyngams are divided up into exogamous clans in the same manner as the Khasis. The clans are exogamous families. The Lyngams have some stories regarding the founders of these clans, of which the following is a specimen:—"A woman was asleep under a *sudder* tree in the jungle, a flower from which fell on her, and she conceived and bore a female child who was the ancestress of the Nongsohbar clan." Some of the stories of the origins of other clans do not bear repeating. There do not appear to be any hypergamous groups. As with the Khasis, it is a deadly sin to

marry any one belonging to your own kur, or clan. Unlike the Khasis, however, a Lyngam can marry two sisters at a time. The Lyngam marriages are arranged by *laiongs* or go-betweens, much in the same way as Khasi marriages; but the ritual observed is less elaborate, and shows a mixture of Khasi and Garo customs (see Section III). The Lyngams intermarry with the Garos. It appears that sometimes the parents of girls elect bride-money, and marriage by capture have been heard of. Both of these customs are more characteristic of the Bodo tribes of the plains than of the Khasis. There are no special birth customs, as with the Khasis, except that when the umbilical cord falls a feast is mentioned, and the child is brought outside the house. Children are named without any special ceremony. The death customs of the Lyngams have been described in Section III. A peculiar characteristic is the keeping of the dead body in the house for days, sometimes even for several months, before it is buried. The putrefying corpse inside the house seems to cause these people no inconvenience, for whilst it remains there, they eat, carry on their ordinary occupations, and sleep there, repetitions of what would be considered by others an intolerable nuisance. The religion of these people consists of a mixture of ancestor-worship and the propitiation of the spirits of hill and hill, which are, most of them, believed to be of evil intention, as is the case with other savage races. As with the people of Mongolia, the primeval ancestress, "*Ka Iaw ka*," is worshipped at the welfare of the clan, a cow being sacrificed to her, with a gourd of rice-beer, and leaves of the sak, or *dieng-soing* tree. The leaves of the sak are afterwards hung up inside the house, together with the jaw-bone of the pig. Sacrifices are offered to a forest demon, *U Blangjang* (a god who brings illness), by the roadside; also to *Ka Mawy Bylli U Mujpuna*, the god of cultivation, at seed time, on the path to the forest clearing where the seed is sown. Models of paddy straw-houses, baskets and agricultural implements are made, and being used to indicate the grain. These are placed by the roadside, the skulls of the sacrificial animals and the feathers of fowls being hung up on bamboos about the place where the sacrifice has been performed. There are no priests or *lyngdohs*, the fathers of the hamlet performing the various ceremonies.

If other alternative taking exists all the problems mentioned here would, the agreement divided so as finally completed with the customary ceremonial. It was mentioned above, what objects in the religious cult are to be found in the hut of the clan section. The little basket plaited of bamboo here, which is considered the special seat of the divine ancestors of the clan, /Clan/ is not divided, /Bili/ another, similar basket is made. By sacrifice of grass and pigs, these divinities are then conveyed so that a part of them may take up their dwelling in the basket for the protection of the newly constructed clan. If the sacrificial priest can announce the agreement of the deceased spirits with the division from the oracle of the entrails of the animals and by egg drawing, then this basket is brought to the new clan hut. On another day one of the two bamboo poles is then taken to the new hut with further sacrifices. Each of the two separated parties must first a new pole to go with the other one. In a like way the common sacrificial vessels, such as the baskets, mats, and gourd bottles are divided. With this ceremony the agreements made about the division of the other property are considered legally existent. Each party now goes its own way independent of the other. Certain relationships of friendship and kinship still remain in existence, however, the bar to marriage, which otherwise would make impossible the marriage between members of the same family clan without regard to the degree of relationship, is no longer in existence.

If, as the conversion of one part of the members of the clan to the Christian religion, the division of property can be accomplished legally, it is better to insist on it. The members who have become Christian are more easily protected from disadvantageous treatment. Even if they should take part of the fields for themselves in separate management, the part of the clan that remained heathen could demand this back years later. Enmity, hate, and revenge would then follow. Without the formal ceremony combined with the sacrifices mentioned a Khasi does not recognize a division as legal. Since Christians cannot participate in such a sacrificial ceremony, there is nothing to do other than to have this ceremony undertaken while those seeking to be baptized are still catechumens. Before they are accepted then into the church by baptism, the heathen cult objects that were brought into the clan hut must be removed. "To /Bili/ this most important ceremony, "the missionary of the Synteng territory, P. Benedikt Heber S.D.S., once related, "I usually went myself if it was possible for me to or sent a European sister of the Order. Thereby the ceremony acquired a great deal

[[See category 18, pp 4.5 — Archivist]]

Dr Gordon G-3 [no date] 1906 ART Sheet ART

(ii) It is easy to use nails in fixing the timber of a house.

(iii) The digits, or hands, should be made of one kind of timber only.

(iv) To build a house with unknown timber ('ark ālāwa). Only the Nono's family use such timber.

(v) To cut trees from the sacred forest.

(vi) To take or give anything with the left hand.

(vii) To step over the body of any person.

(viii) To kill a fowl or a goat without throwing fire ova over the body of the victim.

(ix) To drink the milk of a cow or goat.

(x) To talk with any one, except with those who are working together, when the thrashing of paddy is going on.

(xi) Not to give fire or water when anyone demands the same.

(xii) A twin birth is easy. It is a more serious matter even than easy if the twins are of opposite sexes.

There are rules of very regarding marriages within prohibited degrees of relationship, and there is a very stringent rule of very ancient sanction against marrying within the kar, or clan. Those who do this are excommunicated and their house or palace are not allowed to be placed in the family succession. To marry within the same kar, or clan, is the greatest crime a Rhoti can commit.

There are special rules of very affecting certain families, e.g., for the clan *Kingsthiong* to eat a certain kind of leaves, for the clan *Khawsawsak* to eat pork, for the Chawa Nono's family to eat dry fish, for the family of the Nono of Wyllong to eat the pumpkin. Possibly, these taboos may be relics of totemism in these families.

14. *The Thlen superstition.*—The following succinct account of this interesting superstition appeared on page 254, paragraph 21, of the *Assam Gazette* of the 5th August 1905. I do not think I can do better than repeat it here: "The tradition is that there was once in a cave near Chawngtuji a gigantic snake, or Thlen, who committed great havoc among men and animals. At last one man, bolder than his fellows, took with him a load of grain and sat himself down by the cave and offered them one by one to the Thlen. By degrees the monster became friendly, and learnt to open his mouth at a word from the man, to receive the lump of food which was then thrown in. When confidence was thoroughly established, the man heated a lump of iron red hot in a furnace, induced the snake at the usual signal, to open his mouth, and then threw in the red hot lump, and so killed him. He then cut up the body and sent pieces in every direction, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever the order was

Khar Dumpey. These three clans—Khar Dohling, Khar Dumpey and Khar Sohsoh cannot intermarry on account of their common ancestry. U Klemen, the sister's husband of U Suboi Rai is of Khar Dumpey clan and furnished me with the above details. He stated that his ancestress married a man of the old settler clans of Mawphlang and came to her husband's village. This man, being of the Khadar Kur, could build a house and cultivate land from the community holding. The property thus acquired passed to the daughters; and gradually the clan Khar Dumpey grew more numerous, and acquired rights in the Ri Raid like an old clan. [Genealogy XIII].

(d) The family of the first wife of U Ompaing furnishes another illustration. The woman Ka Li came with her widowed mother from Cherra. The father had been a Syntong from Jowai. The girl has been married by U Bodon, who is a member of one of the old settler clans. He has built a house for his family and made an excellent potato garden out of the common land for the maintenance of his wife and children. They will inherit it from him according to the usual Khasi custom. [Genealogy XIII].

(e) U Roberts who is a Syntong of Jowai, and a Christian by religion (Genealogy V) came to Mawphlang in 1930-31 and after a couple of years married a non-Christian Khasi girl by Khasi rites thereby losing his membership of the church. He cultivated Ri Raid land when he stayed with his wife's mother Ka Shemi [Genealogy V]. This woman is of Khar Suboi clan. One of her ancestresses, came to Mawphlang only a few generations ago, and married a man of the old clans. Her descendants have thereby obtained the privilege of cultivating Ri Raid. U Roberts has divorced his wife and no longer possesses this right. He now works as a tailor in the village, and lives with a friend near the bazaar.

(f) Gurdon has suggested that the large number of clans having Khar as the first part of the name of the Kur have originated from ancestresses who were carried off from the plains

[p. 33]

CHAPTER IV

The Khasi marriage prohibitions may now be discussed in some detail. The rules regarding levirate and sororate have already been noted. The Khasi is also exogamous with regard to his Kur. This has extended to clans derived from the same ancestry. A Khasi cannot also marry his father's brother's daughter, or his father's father's brother's daughter. He cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter so long as this uncle is alive but may do so after the death of this relative. He cannot also marry his father's sister's daughter so long as the father is alive but may marry her after the death of his father. Gordon records that even then "such unions are looked upon with disfavour by Khasis." In the War country, such marriages are totally prohibited.[1]

It has been noted in the previous chapter, that the basic unit of Khasi society is the house where the children are born and where the women stay all their lives and with which the men also are connected intimately even when they go elsewhere in marriage. It has also been observed that the authority is vested entirely in the men. The women have various rights not found in many patrilineal groups; but it would be a mistake to underestimate the position of the men in the house. The father is the head of his small family—the simple family consisting of himself, his wife and the children. He is also the person in authority over his sisters' households in matters affecting the extended family as opposed to the simple family. Although his own children, and the children born in his natal house are distinguished on account of their social and economic differentiation, nevertheless, they are, to a certain extent, both like children to

him. His own brothers again, are to him his successors in the permanent rights, which are linked with the house of birth. Their bones all return to the common cemetery of ancestral house. Apparently, this close association of the brothers with the house of birth is responsible for the rule that children of brothers cannot marry. If we formulate the prohibitions from the standpoint of the women, we can get a clear idea of their significance.

A Khasi woman cannot marry her father's brother's son; nor even the son of this cousin. Again, a Khasi woman cannot marry her father's sister's son during the life-time of her father; but may do so after his death. As we know, the father's death and return of the bones cuts the link of the children and their mother with the father's house of birth. The women who safeguard and maintain the Khasi religious traditions, will therefore raise no objection to the marriage of a woman of their house with the father's sister's son, who is now no longer closely related and is a man of another house merely. But the case is different with the other cross-cousin. A woman cannot marry her mother's brother's son, even after the death of that uncle, without incurring odium. In the War country, such a marriage is not permissible even after the uncle's death. We know that the relation with the mother's brother is not severed either at marriage or at death. The links are maintained even after death. His bones come back and rest in the cemetery of the house and the clan of his women relatives. The decease of this uncle does not therefore place his son in the category of a person with whom the formerly existing bond has been broken. We may sum up the distinction as follows :—

In the case of the father's sister's son, the death of the father breaks the link between a woman and her cousin in the other house, as neither of the parents of that male cousin were born in the house or extended family of the woman. In the case of the mother's brother's son, the father of that cousin is of the woman's own house and one with whom the bond endures even

after death. In the first case the house of the male cousin's parent will not rest in the memory of the girl's house. In the second case, the house of one parent of the male cousin will rest there. §72

The restrictions on cross-cousin marriage, and the difference in the two cases, bring out the importance of the house of birth and of the women who preserve the continuity of the Khasi religious traditions in this house. From the woman's standpoint, the bar to intermarriage of children of sisters is absolute. Their house will rest in the same memory after death in every case. The limitations on marriage of cross-cousins, who are of different households are less strict, the degree depending on the closeness of the link with the house of birth of the woman concerned.

The prohibition of marriage of parallel cousins born of two brothers is based on a similar reason. Stress is laid by men on the unity of brothers, just as the women stress the unity of sisters. The rights in property and common or practically common residence, and the custodianship of the "religion" unite the latter. The authority and other rights already noted, unite the brothers in similar fashion. They also are in a sense guardians of the "religion." It is true that they marry in different households; but the bond that links them together and with the natal house is not broken thereby. We have seen that they retain the links and rights during life. Also, on death, they all return to the house of birth, in the repository of bones, and eventually are united with all men born in their house and the houses that have preceded it, in the same Kur. (This unity of the men and separation from the women is observed in the placing of the bones for the two sexes at every stage of the bone disposal rites.) Their children will therefore be linked always to this house through the houses of their fathers.

The recognition of the permanent bond linking the members of the natal house is, therefore, here also the important factor in prohibiting intermarriage between their children.

Hodson has suggested that the prohibition of marriage of parallel cousins was the result of an earlier dual stage of Khasi

[52] society. He states "In a dual society the children of two brothers are commonly so closely related as to be unable to marry. This prohibition takes no weight in the dual dept. It survives—because—if it does not directly promote—it does not impede the great social economy which arises when a multiple society develops from a dual society, the economy of giving wives to and getting wives from the new groups. The children of two brothers are called pen Kha because they are kins on the male side."

The prohibition of marriage of a woman with the father's brother's son's son is ascribed to the economy of prohibiting "a marriage which maintained and was maintained by the dual system." Hodson explains that under dual organization and matrilineal descent a man's F.F.B.D. would be of the opposite moiety and married to a man classed as mother's brother. Among Gurus a man married his mother's brother's widow and also her daughter under the mukrum system for control of property." "Kinship custom definitely forbids a marriage - which is the pivot of the Guru system which rests on the maintenance of the dual interest in the estate. This dual control would obviously be difficult to maintain against the pressure of competing groups which results from the development from a dual basis to a multiple basis." The rules regarding cross-cousin marriage are also ascribed by him to the break-up of the dual system. Hodson did not consider it necessary to distinguish the actual cross-cousin and mother's brother and father's sister from the classificatory kin of that status. He states that the distinction between the two kinds of cross-cousin marriage could not be drawn until "the dual system had ceased to operate, since so long as it flourished, the wife of the mother's brother would be the father's sister." His explanation of the prohibitions is that they "facilitate, may be intended to facilitate and may survive because they facilitate marriages with men of class other than those of the two, to which the parents belong." Hodson fails to realize that there is no evidence of preferential mating of cross-cousins in the past,

N. Chattopadhyay E-4, 5 (no date) 1941 ART Khasi ART

among Khasis. Even the Garos whom he cites apparently as representing a type of social organisation which the Khasis had earlier, do not encourage marriage with the father's sister's daughter. There is also no evidence that a Khasi ever married his mother's brother's widow. As I have shown earlier, the marriage prohibitions regarding cross-cousins can be explained on the basis of existing social and economic forces in Khasi society. The rule regarding exclusion of the F.B.Z.Z merely states that a woman cannot marry the son of her para Kha. It is not a new prohibition.

We may now state the reasons why a Khasi calls his father's brothers by the same term as father, and the wives of these uncles, as mother, using of course a qualifying term for seniority and juniority. As noted before, a Khasi boy or girl calls his mother's sister's children brothers and sisters. He avoids them strictly in marriage. They are not like cross-cousins, marriageable under certain circumstances. Any sexual approach towards them would have led in the old days to exile and also excommunication. The children of the father's brother are similarly excluded from the category of marriageable persons. They are like brothers and sisters, and as such are addressed as Bah, Hep and Kong. They are referred to as Para Kha. As Hodson observes, the term Para conveys, when used as a prefix, the idea of having common rights or status. It also means, when used by itself, a younger brother or sister. The term Kha refers to relation (by birth) through a male. It is used for example in the combination Bah Kha, which denotes both varieties of cross-cousins, the children of the mother's brother, as well as the father's sister. A Khasi man (and) woman has already another set of parallel cousins who are sexually tabooed. Their parents are given terms denoting the father and mother, with certain modifications. As the children of the father's brothers are also sexually tabooed, it would be natural to extend to them the terms used for the parents of the other group of non-marriageable cousins.

For the species to increase and continue he says, Here—

The mother to bear and give birth—	—	The son of others	The aunt *ka nia kha* (father's sister)	Ia Ib

156
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For the house to continue and the world to remain he says, Here—

The aunt *ka nia kha* (father's sister)	—	The son *u khun kha* (son of brother of *ka nia kha*)	The cousin *ka kakha* (daughter of *ka nia kha*) father's sister)	Ib IIa

For the person (*rupiew*) to crystalise, and the stature (*ryniong*) to remain he says, Here—

father's mother (*ka kmie kha*)	—	The son *u khun kha* (son of brother of *ka nia kha*, who is grandson of *ka kmie kha* (father's mother)	The cousin *ka para kha* (daughter of father's brother)	Ib IIIa

The Khasi knows the 'sang' (*sacru*, sacred, that which is forbidden as sacred). He has experimented and therefore he says *ka sang iap* (*lit.*, that which is 'sacred' or forbidden or taboo unto death) in the case of those who committed incest in the same *jaid*, kind, species, that is, those of the *a* group. It is sacrilege. There is no greater punishment than for this sin,—a punishment so severe that the Khasi will not permit the bones of these transgressors to enter the family cairn. Similarly they regard as an act of sacrilege for children of brothers (*shi para kha*) to inter-marry. Thus the Khasi regards as 'sacred', that is, forbidden or tabooed, for those who are sprung of or connected through the same womb, and for those who are generated of and are suspended from or strung to one umbilical cord in origin, to marry. That is they regard as *sang* for the *a+b* man – woman group to marry the *b* son. [see Tables (1) & (2)].

684

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14:Roy 1-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

582 The Khasi knows the 'byrsieh'. The word *byr* means 'to appear', and, *sieh* means foul, thus *byrsieh* means to defile or corrupt; and *'tep'* means cover, *byrtep* means to cover, to spread over. Hence *ka byrsieh ka byrtep* means something which spreads over and makes everything foul, defiled and corrupt. Khasis regard marriage even in the case of cousins as not the right thing (*lit.*, not good), the *khun kha* (son of the son) that is the *b* son and his sister to give the seed to the house of his *kmie kha* (mother of the son, i.e. father's mother), that is, the house of the *a* group. Thus [824] no seed, e.g., seed of trees, rice, cucumber, pumkins, *shriw* or Job's tears, or millet, are taken from the children of the son by the family of the mother of that son, that is, no seed is taken from the children (*ki khun kha*) born of the son by his mother and sisters. Any seed given by these grand-children born of the brothers must be paid for if taken by his mother and sisters.

Thus Khasis do not consider that it is good for children of the brothers to marry the children of the sisters, though they are cousins, i.e. for III (a) to marry II(a). They believe that there will be misfortune and that they will not thrive. They consider it is better that the brother of II(a) marries the sister of III(a). In the case of these nearest cousins, however, they avoid such marriages so long as I (b), the father who is the uncle of II(a) is alive. [Table (3)]

Khasis do not consider it the right thing (regard it as 'bad') for the elder or younger brother of the wife to marry the elder or younger sister of

14: Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

the husband. Whichever side is *jem ka rwiang* (*lit.* whose person is less strong, less able to resist the evil) will suffer death. The word *rwiang* means more than literally 'fortune.' The word *rwiang* goes with *rngiew* and the two are coupled together as *ka Rngiew ka Rwiang*. *Rngiew* is the person, the man's 'ama'. '*Rwiang*' is the encircling power produced by that person, hence *jem ka rwiang* means the power encircling the man's person becoming easy of being conquered or subdued. (*Jem* = easy, pliable.)

In a word, the Khasi's idea of himself is that he stands in the middle of the world. We do not find terms in the languages of peoples with the family system to express varieties of relationship to the extent that we have in the Khasi vocabulary. Some of the other languages content themselves with terms for father, mother, uncle, aunt, cousin. They have no words to differentiate the classificatory-descriptive system of terms showing relationship with mother, mother's elder and younger sistere (*mei*, *mei san*, *mei nah*); father and his elder and younger brothers (*kpa*, *kpa san*, *kap nah*) and father's brother's children (*para kha*), father's mother (*mei kha*), mother's mother (*mei rad*,) wife's brother (*kynum*), husband's brother (*kong*), and so on. We find in the Khasi sociology, departments of social organization indicating the attitude towards life which is peculiar to the Khasi. The terms are not mere names but serve to show well-defined groups based on an idea of their special functions. As Dr. R. R. Marett says, "Exogamy, and everything

14:Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

else that we do is instinct with a *plus*; and for the student of religion or of human culture in any of its forms, to account for that *plus* is the sum and substance of his task.....Whereas, then, there is likelihood that any *a posteriori* reason existed for believing that in-breeding makes for sterility, if indeed it be true in fact at all, there might well have been an *a priori* conviction to much the same effect based simply on a fear that to tamper with the fountain-head of human vitality would somehow cause it to dry up." The Khasi stands in the world as exogamous in his rule of life, and he says '*sang bad byrsieh*', that is, endogamy is forbidden and if it should ever be committed it will render life defiled and corrupt. He says this out of the fear of the knowledge that any act of carelessness in the prohibited area of the source of human life and vitality, which is in the Khasi phrase '*long briw*' (*long* is to be or become, *briew* is man, i.e., to be or become man), will make that source of human life to dry up. So he says, 'duh I jaid I khong' (*duh*=is exterminated; *jaid*=kind, species; *khong*=root).

In refutation of such aspersions as that the Khasi has no rules of marriage, I shall quote the most sacred pronouncement the Khasi when two persons, the man and the woman, are initiated into that state. Calling upon the name of God the Khasi says—"*U Lei thaw briew man briw, u' Lei ne ka 'Lei synshar'*, (God who creates man and is the source of human life, God who keeps, controls, preserves), "*Hei ko Blei na jrong, Ko*

14: Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

Blei na thian, ko Lei Synshar, Ko Blei triw, man briw, kumba la hukum kumba bhu ma phi U Blei ka Blei ban long I Kha I man, kumba la pynhiar ka synjat mynta ka sgni, ba phin tip, ba phin sngew na jrong ho kyndiang ba ita I jaid bad ita I jaid ki la iapoi kha poi man ban iaroi ban ia man ban ia heh ka long kynthei ka long shynrang', Oh God from above, oh God from below, Thou God who controllest, who keepest and preservest, Thou God who createst man and the origin and source of human life,—as ordained by Thee, Oh God, U Blei (God in the male aspect), Ka Blei (God in the female aspect) that there should be *I Kha* (person to bear and give birth) *I man* (person with whom and through whom to give cause to life and to grow), as token has been brought down this day, [a ring is given], so that Thou mayest hear clearly from above, that such and such *jaid* (kind, clan) and such and such a *jaid* (kind, clan) have become joined in marriage in order to increase, in order to grow, so as to increase the state of being female and the state of being male (i. e. male and female population)." [This is said as a woman of a certain clan always marries a man of a different clan.] As I have said elsewhere, "There is no tradition among the Khasis that there was ever a time when the status of marriage did not exist among our ancestors. There is a belief among the Khasis that they were instructed in their religion and that their ceremonies and rites were delivered by God Himself to the

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

necessary. The chances of acquiring a piece of land nowadays are small, except for very successful men, and usually the size of the plot is only just enough to maintain one household. When this land is passed on to the next generation, the youngest daughter will hold the title to it. This fact tends to exclude married elder sisters from the right to use the land, since it is not sufficient for more than one household. Thus the ultimogeniture succession rule seems to have developed more sharply and to have encouraged limited inheritance in conjunction with the shortage of land.

This tendency creates unbalance in the economy of the households within a community. It is a usual picture in Khasi villages, for the bigger and well-built houses to be occupied by the youngest daughter's family, while the elder sisters reside in poor huts. Youngest daughters are usually landowners, while their elder sisters have often to become day-labourers after their marriage, unless their husbands are capable men, or their fathers wealthy enough to give them some share of their acquired property. On the whole, the variations at present between rich and poor are considerable in a Khasi community, in comparison with that of the Garo, where the economic condition of each household in a village is more or less similar. These differences are not only a matter of economic organization but arise from the nature of each social structure.

The economic and social patterns of Sohkynduh and Kongton are very similar, but their dialects are slightly different: my interpreter, who came from Cherrapunje, could work quite well at Sohkynduh, but at Kongton he found some difficulty, especially with the speech of the old men, and with their religious expressions. The head man of Kongton, who was quite accustomed to the Cherra dialect, acted as an interpreter for us. Such differences in dialect in the Khasi Hills are common phenomena; it is said that every valley has its own dialect. Differences are found not only in speaking, but also, to a certain extent, in culture and in social usages.

II. Village Endogamy

One of the outstanding features of Khasi social organization is the predominant tendency of endogamy on the level of the village, which contrasts with the structural orientation of the Garo village exogamy. This is closely connected with the distributions of clans and the nature of the descent groups.

The Khasi population consists of a number of *kur*, matrilineal clans, whose members consider themselves to be descended from a common ancestress. The members of the same *kur* have a common

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

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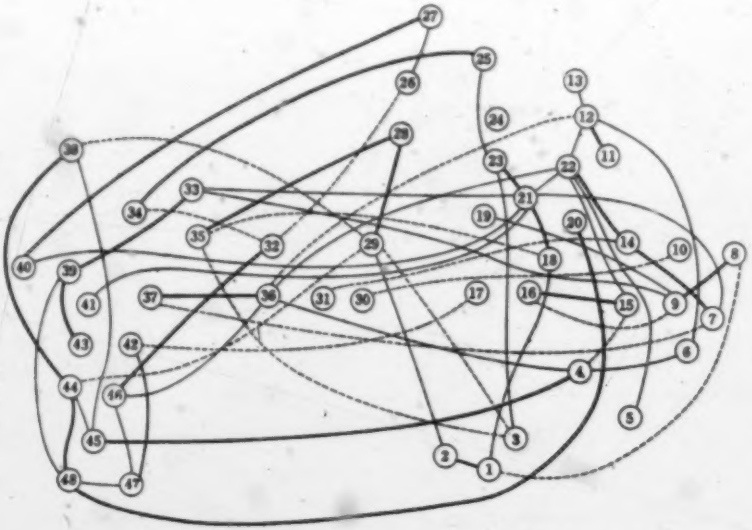

FIG. 10. — *Kinship and Household Location in Sohkynduh.*
——— Matrilineal kinships relations among household-owners;
——— Affinal relations (direct) among household-members;
- - - - - Affinal relations (indirect) among household-members.

particular two families are not restricted to one, but may be accumulated two or three, though I omitted to indicate these in Fig. 10.

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There are some extensions of marriage relations with members outside the village. In Sohkynduh, out of 88 (48 houseowners and 40 their husbands) 13 men and 2 women came from neighbouring villages. Owing to the predominant uxorilocal arrangement, those who came in from outside the village were mostly men. By these members, five different *kur*, new to Sohkynduh, were found, as shown in List 7 (17-21). Most of these outsiders came from villages inside the Kadashinong, or villages no further than a day's journey there and back. This area might be called a secondary endogamous area, and includes more than half a dozen villages. In Kongton, 20 husbands and 3 women came from neighbouring villages by their marriages. The secondary endogamous areas of Kongton and of Sohkynduh are not the same but they overlap in certain places, the surrounding areas being centred on each village. There were, by December 1955, no instances of direct marriage between these two villages.

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There are a few exceptions to local endogamy, such as those individuals who have become Christians and are educated in towns like Shillong or Cherrapunjee. They usually move to a town, seeking

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15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

some clerical work. However, such instances are very rare in these regions and few Christians are to be found among the people. So far as my genealogical table accounts for, only two boys from Sohkynduh, and one girl and one boy from Kongton, left for Shillong, and married there. In contrast to these exceptional cases in these villages, in the upland Khasi Hills, there are considerable changes in the composition of a village with high geographical and social mobility of population because of the spread of Christian education and urban influence.

The people of the two villages say that marriages with outside people were not formally practised, and were only a recent tendency. However, the composition of the population of the two villages showed extensive movements of population in the past (not to urban areas, but from village to village). Such movement is attributed mostly to migration by a family rather than by an individual on marriage. This type of migration is clearly found also in the process of the formation of Jatinga village (see Appendix, Jatinga).

The composition of the village community and the social characteristics of Sohkynduh and Kongton show very similar features of village endogamy. They seem to be typical of the traditional pattern of Khasi villages. Village endogamy is the intrinsic pattern among the Khasis. This fact can be also observed to a considerable degree in Shella and Jatinga.

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15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

601 [171] term *mama* for mother's brother designates as well mother's mother's brother. 3) Terms for mother's sister *(kmie)* and father's sister *(ñia)* are different; and, needless to say, father's brother is called *kpa*, not *kñi*. 4) Mother's mother *(meirad)* is differentiated from father's mother *(meikha)*, though the grandfathers on both sides are termed *parad*.

• 582 601 [171] As regards cross-cousin marriage, which, as we have seen, was an essential part of Garo social structure, the Khasi have no institutional arrangements. The cross-cousin distinction is indeed found in the Khasi kinship terminology. Among those who are called *para* (sibling), an additional term is applied to cross-cousins (both matrilateral and patrilateral). They are called *bakha*. However, this additional cross-cousin term should not be considered as indicating a preference [171] for cross-cousin marriage. This is structurally different from that of the Iroquois type discussed in terms of Garo kinship terminology, in which a prescrived cross-cousin marriage is involved. The term *para* (sibling) is more often used for them than *bakha*.[1] Actually, among the Khasi there is no preference for cross-cousin marriage; indeed there are even indications to the contrary, in that marriage with the mother's brother's daughter is not allowed during the life-time of the maternal uncle. In the same way, marriage with the father's sister's daughter is not allowed during the life-time of the father.

582 In fact, the Khasi have numerous prohibitions of marriages between near kin on both paternal as well as maternal sides. The first and second parallel cousins are avoided. Those related to father within three generations are avoided. Within such a framework of marriage prohibitions, the use of a special additional term for cross-cousins is an indication of marriageable relatives within the framework of prohibition. This should not be considered to indicate a marriageable member in an active sense or a preference for cross-cousin marriage.

However, such marriages do sometimes appear in my census; for example, a man may have married a woman who is the sister of his brother's wife, or of his sister's husband. Thus sometimes between two descent groups there are more than two exchanges of men. But such relations are temporary and would terminate after one or two 582 generations. There is no structural continuity. My censuses of four Khasi villages do show some tendency to marriages between two 614 specific *kur*, but I consider this to be largely accidental. When the choice of an individual is random, but one or two *kur* are larger than the others, it will naturally follow that there will be a high frequency

[171] 1. Such use of the dual terminology is also found among the Zuni and the Trukese, (see the discussion, in pp. 154-155).

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

of marriages between these two *kur*. Such marriage arrangements cannot be regarded as constituting a cross-cousin institution. From my data of four villages it was not possible to produce any institutionalized pattern.

In general, the selection of a marital partner depends mainly on personal choice, though the authority of the *iing* (descent group) and parents should be consulted. The man proposes to the girl. The network of marriage relations among the Khasi seems in no way to follow any set principle. Every marriage is likely to be fortuitous: it is ruled simply by temporary personal liking, except for the strict rule of exogamy and the avoidance of near kin.

Exogamy is strictly kept. In the olden days breaking this rule was equivalent to being sentenced to death. Offenders had their heads shaved in a particular way and had to leave the Khasi community completely. Even now such a marriage is considered as the worst kind of sin; a Khasi Christian intellectual said to me that it was worse than homicide. I came across one couple who had broken this rule. Though they had different *kur* names, both *kur* were segments of one common *kur*. It happened in Jatinga, one of the most modern Khasi communities whose inhabitants were all Christians. The couple were not allowed to have their house inside the village. Their house was in the jungle about one mile away from the village.

Successive sororate marriage—marriage to a younger sister of the late wife—is practised, since it justifies the widower in remaining in the same household as his children after his wife's death. Otherwise, the Khasi rule demands that he should leave the house and his children in order to remarry another woman. We shall deal with this aspect again in terms of marriage.

II. Principle of Descent and Succession

Previously I have mentioned the *kpoh*, the matrilineal kin group with a common great grandmother. This is not, however, an institutional corporate descent group. The most important functional descent unit is called *iing*. The *iing* is the lowest order of clan segmentation, smaller than the *kpoh*—a *kpoh* may include two or more *iing*. The generation depth of an *iing* is usually two to four, in some cases an *iing* is formed only by mother and child. The Khasi consider this unit to be the most important social index for the classification of individuals. Marriages are arranged by individual *iing*, not by wider groups of kinsmen. The *iing* is the structurally significant norm. The term *iing* is also used for a house building itself, as is the *nok* of the Garo. However, the membership of the *iing*, as I shall

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7
Garo AR5

tion of the matrilineal system (see Nakane, 1958/B and 1962). In comparison with the Ashanti, the Khasi or the Trobriand type gain considerable stability by sacrificing either *A* or *B* line, which is one of the possible ways of preserving the matrilineal system along with the practice of co-habitation of the married couple.

Another solution of the conflicting situation in such a society is the practice of cross-cousin marriage, as in the case of the Ashanti, which brings two conflicting factors together, the matrilineage and the family of procreation. In this case, the cross-cousin marriage tends to take place between the first cross-cousins centred around each man. Fortes states, "Cross-cousin marriage most often occurs between the children of full siblings or of uterine first cousins . . . cross-cousin marriage offers a possibility of reconciling the conflicting influences of conjugal, parental, and matrilineal kinship ties" (1950, p. 282). This is quite different from the cross-cousin marriage of the Garo, because among the latter, the cross-cousin marriage being practised as the basis of the whole structure of society, it makes no difference whether a cross-cousin is first or classificatory. In the case of the Ashanti and other matrilineal systems of a similar type, such as the Mayombe and the Kongo, it is considered most desirable to enter into a first cross-cousin marriage; classificatory cross-cousin marriage, such as among the Garo, does not make much sense. Moreover, the cases of cross-cousin marriage tend to take place among comparatively wealthy members in a society (see Rattray, 1927, Chapter XXIX). If one has no property in the Ashanti type society, then cross-cousin marriage has not much meaning.

The cross-cousin marriage of matrilineal systems has been often referred to as being the solution to the conflicting situations of a man as a husband and as a brother. I suggest here that this can be applied to the matrilineal system of the Ashanti type; not to those of the Khasi type where men have already given up the role of forming the central core of the matrilineage. In these societies, the solution is already given through the sacrifice of one line. There are no conflicting economic factors, though men are still in a situation of social conflict between their matrilineage and family of procreation. This hypothesis is confirmed empirically by the fact that there are no prescribed or preferential cross-cousin marriages among the Khasi, the Hopi, the Zuni, the Trukese and the Negri Sembilan Malay,[1] where a man is not in economic conflict with his matrilineage and family of procreation. His nephews are already outside his economic

1. "In arranging marriages the preference is for someone 'near'. As cross-cousins are the nearest possible naturally a large number of these marriages occur . . . This preference, however, is not explicitly institutionalised . . ." (Swift, 1958, p. 156).

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

621 descent grouping are often different. This is a very similar pattern to the
[184] mobility which I discussed in Sohkynduh and Kongton (see p. 112).

One of the outstanding features in this community is the strong paternal
178 authority, established especially in the first generation, because the father's
593 (husband's) contribution was very important in such circumstances: their
61 domestic units were completely independent from the *iing* either of husband
or wife. Some of them came with their wives, and many younger ones and
their sons brought their wives from their homeland afterwards, thus practising
621 virilocal marriage.

They have an interesting social usage which reflects the importance of the husband of the first generation. This is the addition of the name of the husband of the first generation to the matrilineal clan name in order to differentiate each particular descent group established at Jatinga within the same clan. For instance, Rupsi-Tah, Rupsi-Loh, Rupsi-Khla and Rupsi-Lati are found in the Rupsi clan. Rupsi-Tah is one of the lines of the first immigrants to Jatinga, which I have mentioned as Rupsi: Tah was taken from Pryntah, the husband of Sintu (Rupsi) (see p. 171). Thus the present inhabitants of Jatinga are very conscious of their father or grandfather, though they strictly follow the matrilineal descent rule. From such a usage of naming a clan, the Indian officer, who gave me some information about Jatinga before I went there, made the mistaken deduction that they had changed from matrilineal to patrilineal, assuming this to have come about as a result of the influence of patrilineal tribes around Jatinga. But this is simply due to the fact, firstly, that they hold in high regard the man of the first generation, because of his great contribution; secondly, that they distinguish themselves from members of the same clan according to the descent group established at each immigration; in other words, it indicates each *iing* grouping in the village.

178 The fundamental Khasi social organization based on the matrilineal system
184 did not change at all. I could observe in Jatinga exactly the same principle
in action as I had found in Sohkynduh and Kongton. The village endogamy
• 582 has also been well established in the present generation: there are about 20 dif-
61 ferent clans which can intermarry, and taking a spouse from an outside com-
munity has become very rare nowadays. Marriage patterns in relation to the
621 *iing* structure and all its related aspects are surprisingly similar to that of the
communities in the Khasi Hills. The solidarity of the *iing* is even greater in Jatinga, particularly among the rich, because of the greater accumulation of wealth and greater economic activity, which also increases the authority of the *iing* as manager of considerable property—this was also the case with the Shella people. Jatinga demonstrates that in spite of colonization and of a significant change in economic activities, Khasi social organization has maintained itself intact. This situation is in contrast with the considerable social changes observed among the Garo community in colonial areas like Rinsibara and Joshipara.

621 ***Intermarriage.***

178 From the earliest period of the establishment of Jatinga up to the present,
582 some changing aspects of marriage patterns relating to intermarriages are to
563 be observed.

As I stated before, in the earlier period, the people used to bring their spouses from their homeland, but they also married neighbouring tribal peoples, namely,
563 the Zemi-Naga, the Kuki and the Cachar of villages close to Jatinga, and
621 also the Lushai, the Bengalee, the Moslem and the Anglo-Indian who lived in Haflong, the biggest political and commercial centre in the Hills, situated

ing from the time it consists of an elementary family until it grows to a local descent group four generations deep. [Cf. Chattopadhyay 1941.] **Kin terminology.** The terms of address given below are also terms of reference except where otherwise indicated, and are uniform for male and female speakers. They were collected in an upland Khasi village near Shillong (cf. Ehrenfels 1953 for some regional variants).

Fa	*pa*
Mo	*mei*
FaElBr	*pasan*
FaYoBr	*pakhynnah*
FaSi	*kha*
Fa youngest Si	*khaduh*
MoElSi	*meisan*
MoYoSi	*meinah*
Mo youngest Si	*meiduh*
MoElBr	*mama, kni*
MoYoBr	*bah* (ref.: *kni*)
ElBr	*bah khynnah*
Eldest Br	*kong bah*
YoBr	*bah deng*
Youngest Br	*bah duh*
ElSi	*deng*
Eldest Si	*lud, kong*
YoSi	*lud nah, lud rit*
Youngest Si	*khatduh*
MoSiSo, MoSiDa	*para* (ref.: *para ar kmie*)
FaBrSo, FaBrDa	*para* (ref.: *parakha*)
MoBrSo, MoBrDa, FaSiSo, FaSiDa	*bakha*

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY. **Mode.** According to the traditional courtship pattern, a group of young male relatives and friends made nightly visits to the house of some virgin girl in another village, appraising her through banter while she and her parents appraised them, and staying the night to avoid the dark walk home. Marriage was according to the wishes of the parents after negotiation by a go-between from the boy's side. Girls might be 15, and boys 17, years of age. Girls have now acquired freedom of movement through attending school, however. Premarital sexual play is common, and young people choose their own spouses when the girl is about 19 and the boy 21. The most common mode of marriage is elopement, for Christians and non-Christians alike, but some Christians marry in church, and some Khasis still marry according to the traditional ceremony or some variation on it. There are no preferred or prescribed marriage types, nor is there a bride price or dowry. **Form.** Monogamy is the ideal for all. **Extension of incest taboos.** Sibs are exogamous. Other prohibited marriage partners are real and classificatory FaSi and FaBr, FaBrCh, FaMo, and FaMoMo. The MoBrWi is also prohibited. Roy

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

of father in Russian (for the *tzar*, etc.), (secondly) the youngest, not the oldest, daughter performs the family rites and inherits the family-property [34]. Even in cases when there is no woman to inherit, the youngest, not the oldest son inherits [35]. Among the conservatively matrilineal Pnár (Jaintia) this term of diminution *i*, however, carries at times a somewhat contemptuous meaning, though the minorate is strongly in force also among them. The ambivalent position of this honorific term of diminution is thus significant (comp. term 9/*e* among Pnár and infra.)

Term 7 — mother: (*i mei*) — The prefix *i* used among Khasi and War Khasi signifies particular reverence (supra: term 6). The classificatory character of the term has been discussed by CHATTOPADHYAY [36].

Term 9/*f* — *hep* for all younger siblings, cousins and even other young folk does not indicate the consideration which the terms 9/*d* — *kong* for older sisters and female cousins, or 9/*e* — *bah* for their male equivalents indicate. The term *san* (9/*e* among Pnár) stands here, as generally, for elder and implies a honorific meaning (comp. term 6 supra and term 13/*a* infra).

Terms 10/*a* and *b* show that husband and wife address each other by equal terms and do in no way indicate anything like an inferior position of either wives or husbands of which I did also not find any indications otherwise. It may here be mentioned that property rights even in newly established estates, vest in women and are inherited by women, — not generally men.

Term 11*d* — *ka khun khadduh* — the youngest daughter whose important position in Khasi religious ritual, social organization and inheritance law has already been referred to sub term 6 and described in detail elsewhere [37]. The affectionate character of this term finds vivid expression in the abbreviation *ka duh*, which I heard from sisters and the father of a youngest daughter.

Term 13/*a* — *mei san* (mother's older sister). The word *san* (older) here has a definitely honorific character, although the *mei khynnah* — the mother's younger sister (term 13/*b*) may be the heir of Ego's ancestral property. This constellation corresponds to the peculiar significance of terms 6, 9/*d* and especially 11/*d* (supra).

Terms 13, 14, 15/*a*, 18, 18/*a*, 18/*b*, and the terms for cousins 19, 20, 21/*a*, 21/*b*, 22 show, like term 7 — mother (supra), classificatory character. The restriction on cross-cousin marriage is of different nature, according as to whether they belong to different households, or not, as has been discussed by CHATTOPADHYAY [38].

Term 16/*a* — *ñia* (mother's brother's wife) is basically the same as term 15 — *ñia kha* (father's sister) [39] though the latter is qualified by the additional term *kha*: (begetting, birth) which signifies paternal relationship (see: term No. 1).

[34] GURDON (1914), pp. 83, seq.; CANTLIE (1934), p. 11.
[35] CANTLIE (1934), p. 22.
[36] CHATTOPADHYAY (1941), pp. 25, seq.
[37] GURDON (1914), pp. 83, seq. and CANTLIE (1934), pp. 11, seq.
[38] CHATTOPADHYAY (1941), pp. 35, seq.
[39] In detail discussed by CHATTOPADHYAY (1941), p. 27.

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

namely that male members of a matrilineal clan enjoy, among Khasi as among other matrilineal groups in India, a position which, far from unenviable, is a very high one in itself and doubly fortified by the respect which to the same male family member is being shown (*a*) in his capacity as the father of his children in his wife's clan (comp. term 8 of the list), and (*b*) in that of the maternal uncle (comp. terms 14, 14/*a*, 14/*b* and 26 and 28).

The terms 33/*b*, *c*, *g*, *h*, have classificatory character.

The term 33/*e* — *u kong* for the husband's older sister's husband is one of the exceptions of the rule that *kong* generally signifies an honoured older female relative but, as in this case, also her husband (comp. term 26).

Term 36/*a u pa* (father) in its usage among Pnár (Jaintia), also for stepfather is significant. A Pnár child has no legal clan-relationsihp with his/her biological father, who belongs to another (matrilineal) clan than the child and mother. Yet the honorific term *pa* is, among Pnár, also applied to a stepfather, although neither legal, nor biological but merely ideological relationship via the mother, exists between stepfather and -child. This use of the word *pa* thus seems to emphasize both, firstly the integration of the matrilineal family structure, by making an unrelated stepfather to be looked upon as father, owing to his relationship with Ego's mother and, secondly the important sociological and psychological position of the father in this matrilineal family structure which appears to go back to an old tradition among the Pnár.

Term 41 — *para 'riew lum* [33] (Assamese hill tribals) are characteristically termed *para* (Brethren), although they are different in many respects, from the Khasi, yet considered as definitely nearer related than all other neighbours, grouped under the

Term 43 — *dkhar* (plainspeople) [34], — a term which varies in emotional content from contempt pure and simple to an attitude, somewhat parallel to what ordinary English usage would generally associate with the expression "continental". Marriages of Khasi girls and boys with *dkhar* do occur, though infinitely rarer than marriages of (especially educated) Khasi girls with (educated) *para 'riew lum*, Nepalese, Gurkha or Chinese boys. One of the reasons which is usually being given for this preference for non-Indians is by no means colour-prejudice, but the taboo on either beef or pork which most *dkhar ïong* [35] (Indians, Hindus or Muslims, respectively) observe; a taboo which they generally extend to their Khasi wives, thus preventing them from enjoying two favourite Khasi national dishes. Another more psychological reason is the overbearing treatment of wives, which is generally ascribed to *dkhar ïong*, more even than to *dkhar li* [36]. It is in this connection

[33] Literally: Brethren Humans Hill.

[34] With Dkhar are here meant the plainspeople as such; — not the Khasi Dkhar (or Khar) clans which are mostly, if not always, descended from ancestresses who had been captured in the plains and brought to the Khasi Hills; comp. CHATTOPADHYAY (1941), pp. 30/31 and EHRENFELS (1950/*A*), pp. 33/34.

[35] Literally: Plainspeople black.

[36] Literally: Plainspeople white.

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

601 582 significant that the reason, given for the comparatively frequent marriages of Khasi girls with Chinese boys is not the greater physical resemblance which no doubt exists between the average Khasi and the average Chinese (Dkhar) as compared to the average non-Chinese Dkhar (Indians, Europeans, Africans, Americans and others) but the belief that Chinese husbands are less domineering in their attitudes towards their wives, than are other Dkhar.

113

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